REFLECTION OF MULTI- CULTURALISM IN SELECT NOVELS BY SHOBHA DE AND MANJU KAPUR : A STUDY

A

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Format of Research Proposal

A] Introduction

B] Objective (s) of Research

C] Hypothesis

D] Data, Scope and Limitation (s)

E] Research Methodology

F] Justification of Research

G] Pedagogical Implications (if any)

H] Tentative Chapterisation

I] Abstract of Research Topic

J] Bibliography

- **i) Primary Sources**
- **ii) Secondary Sources**

K] Webliography

A] Introduction

Literature has often been instrumental to provoke human emotions and reflect upon the sensibilities over the centuries. The same aims to reflect upon the human experiences received from the social set up a scenario in which human beings accommodate themselves. It makes us laugh, makes us burst into tears and infuse us by stirring social realities. An outstanding piece of literature, simply intends transgression of readers into the world of beauty, factual reality and noble feelings as experienced in real life. In fact, it imparts us an opportunity to indulge in extra-textual realities, those at times could be, greater than realities itself. It best rejoices social scenario in best possible ways and means by refereeing to its conventional values, culture, and race, social, religious, political and universal conditions of life. It cannot be confined to a particular place or chronology, as it doesn't represent an individual, but to the orientation of culture, generation and centuries together. Hence, studying this mirror reflection of society, from the depth of comprehensive understanding should be the aim of any researcher in English literature.

Literary theory is delineated as the body of ideas and methods generally used in practical reading of literature. Literary theory, therefore, prefers not to the meaning of a literary work but to the theories that reveal what literature exists to mean. It describes the underlying principles, one might say to the tools, by which we attempt to understand literature in best possible ways. Literary interpretations are drawn on the basis of theories those can serve justification for very different kinds of critical acclamation. The same instrumentally affirms the relationship between the author and his work by referring to the significance of race, class, culture, social, political, religious and economic conditions of the society. Rather it provides the best possible standpoint to assess, interpret any work of art via its appropriate analysis of thematic complexities within the text.

All literary theories, therefore, undertake a systematic study of literature and methodologically interpret it for creating interrelations between the textual entities. The theoretical canon of undertakes critical examination of cultural diversity, plurality along with social, political, cultural, religious, ethnic, racial and linguistic pluralism affecting the conscience of the characters. The theory seeks to find out discriminative factors of culture, race, gender, ethnicity to the best possible depth and simultaneously encourages mutual understanding, appreciation and critical examination of text under the shades of its complex texture of cultural plurality. The present research aims to explore the theoretical, ideological and logical configuration of Multi-culturalism by an insightful analysis of its origin, developmental course and relative aspects. Similarly, it aims to have all pervasive analysis of "Shobha De's "Socialite Evenings" (1989) and Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughters" (2002) by all possible dimensions of Multi-culturalism in its due course.

B] Objective (s) of Research

The primary objective of this study is to establish a strong theoretical foundation for the Literary Theory of Multi-culturalism. This will be achieved through an extensive examination, analysis, and comprehensive interpretation of the said theory by refereeing to its origin, contribution and developmental course in the history. Likewise, the study aims to broaden the concepts of cultural diversity, pluralism, hybridity, and cultural consciousness. It delves into the critical elements and features of Multi-culturalism, aiming to deepen understanding to meet its universal orientation and reflection in the textual entities.

Concurrently, the study involves the close reading, critical analysis, and interpretation of two literary works: Shobha De's "Socialite Evenings" and Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughters." The study aims to examine these novels through the lens of Multi-culturalism, with the intention of expanding and substantiating the theoretical assumptions presented by the selected authors.

C] Hypothesis

Multi-culturalism, as a significant literary theory, leads to assess both positive outcomes (cultural enrichment, mutual respect, and cohesion) and challenges (cultural diversity, conflicts, identity fragmentation) specifically in transient societies like that of Indian featured with unity in diversity. The notion celebrates cultural diversity, plurality within literature by analyzing literary text's reflexive engagement with different cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backlashes amongst the marginalized sections of society. The research affirms the female protagonists in the select novels as the by-product of Multicultural society set in transition through the processes of urbanization, globalization and cultural dilution by social, political, cultural colonization. The collective assessment and validation of their rebellious voice and sub-sequent choices would provide a firm foundation to delineation of Multi-culturalism at universal levels.

D] Data, Scope and Limitation (s)

The present research mainly depends on the availability of the study material in the library and moreover it relies on the findings of Multicultural perspectives in the selected texts. However, it would be a limited study of specific works ofselected authors. Further, if it necessitates, the research can be extended by referring to more texts by similar authors. There would be a greater opportunity to include additional Multicultural Perspectives as per the findings of the research. The same would manifold all the relevant aspects logically applicable to the chosen topics for this research.

E] Research Methodology

The present research would utilize descriptive and analytical research methodology so as to access MulticulturalPerspectives in selected novels. It would undertake extensive readings of primary and secondary data for its investigation of perspectives. In order to gain

its formative conclusion, the research would engage library methodology as per the availability of information on the topic.

F] Justification of Research

Indeed, the research would bring greater benefits and interest for the students, knowledge seekers, researchers and trainees in the field of literature and aspirants of Multi-culturalism. The same would open multiple layers of criticism the theory along with its apt interpretation, explanation and constructive analysis. The research would be beneficial to students of literature to build their comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Multi-culturalism. Simultaneously, it would also comment on the contemporary social realities.

G] Pedagogical Implications (if any)

The research in the theoretical foregrounding of Multi-culturalismand selected novelists would delineate a formative understanding of the theory and authors' philosophical disposition. It would revolve around numerous layers of Multi-culturalism. Thus, it would be helpful to the students, researchers and critics as well. Those who are seeking their interest to understand Multi-culturalism Literature and conditions would get benefited highly through the research.

H] Chapterisation

1] Chapter First: Introduction

The theoretical denotation of Multi-culturalism recognizes and celebrates the co-existence of diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups within a single society. Relatively it respects, acknowledges and values aforesaid differences while fostering social cohesion and equal rights for all individuals, regardless of their cultural backdrops at large. Multi-culturalism, as a literary theory, focuses on the representation and exploration of cultural diversity, plurality within literature by analyzing how literary works reflect and engage with different cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backlashes. Simultaneously, the

theory seeks promotion of mutual understanding, appreciation and critical examination of text under the shades of its complex texture of cultural plurality and complexities alike. Its core principle encourages the authorial preferentiality to characters, settings and themes reflexive of diversity from the real world experiences. Multi-culturalism delves around numerous circles of culture, traditions, beliefs, languages and practices recognized against the backdrop of pluralistic society. The theory undertakes the quest of identity and belongingness while negotiating within the circles of multiple cultural affiliations. Relatively, the theory intentionally examines how the characters are placed to grapple with their cultural roots and navigate with different cultural contexts.

Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings* and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* focuses on the narratives of the main female characters against the backdrop of cultural conflicts and plurality. They could be seen negotiating with the stereotypes perpetuated through literary orientations against the cultural hybridity and syncretism. Their life struggle blends the texture of cultural, linguistic and traditional multicultural societies. They are placed to negotiate with multiple identities, and break apart eventually in their lives aspiring to revisit their cultural roots and integrate into the broader societal fabric.

The present chapter intends to provide a firm theoretical foundation to launch research insight into the realm of Multi-culturalism, its developmental course and essential aspects of the same. Simultaneously, it would develop interconnections between specific novels of Shobha De and Manju Kapur placing their female protagonists amidst the circles of Multi-culturalism, hybridity, globalization, cultural pluralism, legacies of colonialism, imperialism, marketization, digitization while negotiating with their identities and roots of cultural integration. It would also cover linguistic diversity contributing to the richness of storytelling, aspects of migration, quest for ethnicity, elimination, discrimination and marginalization of females under the shades of race, gender, religion, ethnicity and culture at large. Fragmentation of females under cultural disintegration, social isolation, domestic violence,

cultural conflicts and identity conflicts would find its best exploration through acknowledgement of cultural differences under the texture of diversity.

2] Chapter Second: Multi-culturalism in Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings*

Multi-culturalism in Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings*, (1989) as the subsequent chapter, would revolve around the life of protagonist Karuna, a charismatic and ambitious woman taking on the role of a party hostess, organizing social events for the wealthy elite in Mumbai. Karuna is known for her char, wit and ability to integrate together the city's affluent individuals for evenings of entertainment and socializing. The texture of novel explicitly focuses on Multicultural backlashes often understood and mis-understood in modern discourse, through certain aspects of cultural and societal diversity. The chapter would interpret numerous aspects of Multi-culturalism under the lens of class division, urbanization, and the clash between traditional values and the influence of Westernization on Indian society. The novel puts forth the stark contrast between the wealthy and privileged socialites and the rest of society. The elite class's lifestyle is drastically different from that of the majority of Indians. The segment would foster around economic, social and class division under the light of urbanization, bustling metropolis, modernization, tradition vs modernity, conflict of values and cultural paradigms resulting into internal conflicts and external commentary. The assessment of Karuna's quest to fulfill her aspirations, and overcome insecurities of the upper-class socialites in Indian society, that too, conflicting with the numerous dominant characters, both male and female, also through dynamics of power, privilege and social expectations within this elite circle would find best possible expression in this chapter. An in-depth interpretation of Karuna's journey would navigate through complex relationships, including those with her daughter, husband and the people she interacts in life. The chapter would bring forth both her internal struggle with personal womanly desires and

external factors affecting her life course through physical, emotional and psychological aspects against the backdrop of Multi-culturalism.

3] Chapter Third: Multi-culturalism in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998) has been recognized as an outstanding novel set against the backdrop of the Indian struggle for independence that unfolds the live of Virmati, a woman who navigates societal expectations and personal desires during a time of significant social and political transitions in the country. The novel principally centers on the personal journey of the female facing multiple challenges within the traditional Indian society, and simultaneously uncovers multiple aspects of Multi-culturalism, specifically through its exploration of clash between tradition and modernity.

Virmati, the female protagonist's quest for self-identity amidst the circles of cultural dilution, pluralism, conflicting with changing values and societal norms brings her under the British colonial influences during the Indian independence movement. Virmati passes through the turbulent period reflecting on the consequences of Multicultural society, grappling with traditional norms conflicting with modernity. Her life spans multiple generations, provides a lens into how cultural values and expectations evolve over time, leading her to dilemmatic psychological fragmentation. She is placed under dominant gender roles, social hierarchies and diversity, and simultaneously is empowered with personal vision and inherent aspirations against the Colonial and Post-colonial influences. Virmati's involvement with a married professor, her rebellious voice and subsequent choices, highlight the tension are the by-product of cultural diversity she is placed within. The novel portrays the challenges faced by individuals aspiring to break conventional norms of society, seeking acceptance and accommodation within the pluralistic society.

The present chapter would bring forth the complex dynamics of Indian pluralistic society by insightful analysis of its cultural, historical, and societal inferences. It would also explore how characters do navigate their roles and relationships in transient society. *Difficult*

Daughters explicitly focuses on the Multi-culturalism through its ethnic and racial dominance, engagint multicultural dynamics of a society in transition, where different ideas and lifestyles are placed in conflict and competitive push with each other. It would be worth noting that *Difficult Daughters* centers on personally felt experiences and explores the social norms in a specific cultural and historical context, rather than being a comprehensive exploration of Multi-culturalism in the contemporary sense and purpose.

4] Chapter Fourth: Reflection of Multi-culturalism in Shobha De and Manju Kapur

The present segment would undertake a collective and comprehensive discussion, analysis and interpretation of aspects of Multi-culturalism found in the developmental course of this research. It would put forth inferences of the said theory under the light of quest of the female protagonists in Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings* and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. Both Shobha De and Manju Kapur explore through various aspects of Indian society, including inferences of Multi-culturalism in their exclusive ways. Yet, their novels are distinct as they focus with different approach and perspectives on the select issues. They do receive certain elements of cultural diversity from the similar backdrop of the contemporary Indian society, yet, their distinctive treatment to the subjectivity, tender issues of female struggle and quest for identity amidst the pluralistic society, ascertains broader context reflexive of the Multicultural society.

Socialite Evenings, the pitiable story of Karuna, focuses on the lives and relationship of the wealthy elite in Mumbai, explicitly delve into Multi-culturalism fostering into the complex interactions between characters from different backdrop of echelons of Indian society. The same puts forth the disparities between the privileged socialites and the majority of the population, shading light on the divisive canvas of socio-economic and cultural diversity. *Difficult Daughters,* on the contrary, revolves around the personal experiences of Virmati, a woman navigating societal expectations against the fire of personal desires. Her

personal quest puts forth Multi-culturalism in modern sense, fostering the clash of choices and preferentiality between tradition vs modernity. The present chapter would put forth comprehensive discussion and critical interpretation of numerous aspects of Multi-culturalism under the light of female protagonists emerging against modern backdrop of cultural complexities and diversity.

5] Chapter Fifth: Conclusion

The formative conclusion of this research would provide a comprehensive understanding of Multi-culturalism and its relative theoretical assumptions via its comparative assessment, interpretation and validation of all numerous essential aspects under the light of Karuna and Virmiti's struggle as denoted by Shobha De and Manju Kapur in their respective narratives. Insightfully, the chapter would delineate, cover all perspectives of Multi-culturalism and have in-depth comparative discussion to provide collective understanding of the same. The segment would postulate upon the consequences and influences of cultural hybridity, plurality, ethnicity, legacies of imperialism, urbanization, marketization, globalization, quest for ethnicity, through the circles of social elimination, domination and discrimination by all possible means of race, gender, religion, ethnicity and culture. Similarly, it would endeavor to put forth contrasting voices and choices made by obediently rebellious female protagonists like Virmati and Karuna representing their needs, ambitions and feminine aspirations in transitional period. The chapter would provide formative conclusion to this research by establishing, validating numerous aspects of Multi-culturalism rose during the developmental course of this research.

I] Abstract of Research Topic:

Multi-culturalism as a literary theory, finds its initial expression in the broader social and intellectual movement of the Mid-20th century that sought to address issues of social justice, civil rights, and cultural diversity. It emerges as a response to the limitations of

traditional literary criticism, which often centered on works from dominant cultural perspectives, leaving out the voices and experience of marginalized and minority groups. The theory has gained prominence by the late 20th century and continues to influence literary studies till today. The theoretical disposition of Multi-culturalism can be understood through several key stages those reflect upon its evolution over the ages. However, the initial inception was marked by the Civil Rights Movement that broadly attains the chronology from 1960s to 1970s. The proponents and scholars began critiquing the Eurocentric focus of literary studies and the lack of representation for marginalized groups. The theory found its affirmation in the 1980s and 1990s, when Multi-culturalism gained significant traction through identity politics. Relatively the scholars have focused on the literary production of specific ethnic and racial groups, including Indian, African, American, Latino, Asian American, Native American and others during the period. The stage gained its significance through scholarly efforts taken by the critics who questioned and critiqued about the essentialist tendencies earlier. Similarly, the theory shaped by the contributions of numerous scholars, writers and thinkers who have advanced its concepts and core principles.

Toni Morrison, a renowned American novelist and Nobel Laureate, Morrison's works often explore the experiences of African Americans and the complexities of race, identity, and history collectively. Her novels, such as "Beloved" and "Song of Solomon" have been instrumental in shaping discussions around Multi-culturalism in literature. Additionally, Edward Said, a Palestinian-American literary theorist and cultural critic, Said's work "Orientalism" challenged Western perceptions of the East and highlighted how literature and cultural representations can perpetuate stereotypes in literary works. His philosophical inclination exhibits the role of power and representation influencing Post-colonial and Multicultural literary studies at large.

Bell Hooks, an influential feminist author, cultural critic, and educator, has written extensively on the issues of race, gender and cultural representation concerning the intersectionality of identities and the importance of recognizing the contributions of marginalized groups in literature. Gloria Anzaldua, a Chicana Feminist, writer and scholar known for her work "Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza" explored about borderlands, identity and hybridity that crucially uncovers numerous petals of Multi-culturalism and Cross-Cultural influences in literature. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o , a Kenyan writer, scholar and Post-colonial theorist, perpetuated about theoretical implications of Colonialism by concerning Multicultural backdrop of African societies. His advocacy for writing in indigenous languages and his critique of Euro-centrism have contributed to the discussion of Multi-culturalism. Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist and critic had explored about Multicultural backlashes through his outstanding work of art, "Things Fall Apart" intentionally sets a classic in Postcolonial literature. His writings do examine the effects of Colonialism on African societies and challenges through Eurocentric narratives.

Homi K. Bhabha, an Indian-British Post-colonial theorist, offered a succinct conceptual clarity to the notions of Multi-culturalism by expanding the margins of hybridity, mimicry and the "third-space" that proved to be influential in Multi-culturalism literary theory. His ideas explore about the complex interactions between cultures and how these interactions are reflected in literature. Additionally, Salman Rushdie, an Indian-British author by origin, offered his outstanding masterpiece, "Midnight's Children" that celebrates the intricate portrayal of India's Post-colonial history against the backdrop of partition of India and Pakistan. His works do affirm and navigates cultural clashes, diaspora and the blending of diverse influence.

Many Indian novelists such as Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children", Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreters of Maladies" and "The

Namesake" weaves together the social, cultural, and historical pluralism by exposing the consequences of history and diversity of cultures in India. Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy" delves into the intricacies of Post-independence India, exploring various cultural and religious aspects within the backdrop of Multicultural society. Anita Desai's "Clear Light of Day", Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Mistress of Spices" and "Sister of My Heart" navigates Indian experiences particularly of Indian women addressing the themes of cultural adaptation and identity fragmentation. In fact, much has been done and much is to be done in the theoretical field of Multi-culturalism in the days to come. These authors explore Multi-culturalism from various angles, showcasing the complexity of India's diverse society and its interactions with the wider world. The present research aims to explore numerous layers of Multi-culturalism reflexive through Shobha De's "Socialite Evenings" and Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughter" by exploring the predicament of female protagonists in these narratives.

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